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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0236
INFO RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHDF/AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF 0252

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: STEPPED-UP SECURITY IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA; TAKING THE
THREAT SERIOUSLY

REF: A. A. BERLIN 862
[B. B. BERLIN 1172](#)

[11](#). (U) Security has been further ratcheted up in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) as a result of the pre- and post-Bundestag election alerts. Armored personnel carriers and stepped up armed police presence are in evidence at airports, and there is a visible increase in police presence at the Duesseldorf main train station as well. The combination of the Al Qa'eda videos and the U.S. travel alert have caught people's attention, though contacts in NRW government and out, including in the Muslim community, tell us the clear attempt to manipulate the vote will not work. They take it seriously - even if the overt security presence makes them uncomfortable - saying that to date, Germany has been fortunate; that good luck may not last forever.

[12](#). (SBU) Police contacts in NRW have confirmed to us the ramped up security. As of Thursday evening, September 24, they have placed 24-hour surveillance on all those who had previously been under general surveillance, using a variety of means. They told us on September 25 that, at this point, this would likely continue indefinitely. Many squad cars are now making their rounds with machine guns on the inside, though not visible to the public. Leave plans for a variety of police agencies have been cancelled or postponed. Their sense - because of our travel alert - is that the "U.S. knows more than we do."

[13](#). (U) The story grabbed headlines in major NRW dailies. Duesseldorf's Rheinische Post's front page story, "Terror Warning for Germany," quoted NRW Interior Minister Wolf as saying they were taking the threat very seriously, that security forces were working very professionally on heightened alert. He referred to the videos as an attempt to sow fear in advance of Sunday's Bundestag elections and influence the vote, adding that "We will not allow ourselves to be intimidated." Cologne's Kvlner Stadt-Anzeiger article noted that one couldn't post APCs and armed security personnel at airports and train stations and then describe the U.S. travel alert as inappropriate. The piece recalled the 2004 Madrid bombings, which killed 191, came shortly before Spain's parliamentary election, contributing to the defeat of the conservatives and the accelerated pullout of Spain's troops from Iraq. The paper also carried a chilling expose on Bekkay Harrach, the speaker in the Al Qa'eda videos, who spent years in Bonn.

[14](#). (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

